

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 AID-20 OMB-01 CU-04 DRC-01

(ISO) W

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R 011024Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7931

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

INFO AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMCONSUL UDORN

USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 17064

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (P A R A 2)

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, TH, TS

SUBJECT: POPULAR REACTION TO FORMER THAI LEADERS' RAIWAN
RESIDENCE

REF: A. BANGKOK 16720 B. BANGKOK 16905 .: BANGKOK 17002

D. TAIPEI 6570 3. TAIPEI 6571

SUMMARY: THE THAI PRESS AND THE NATIONAL STUDENT CENTER OF THAILAND (NSCT) HAVE PUBLICLY EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT THE PRESENCE OF FORMER THAI LEADERS PRAPHAT CHARUSATHIEN AND NARONG KITTIKACHORN IN TAIPEI. RESENTMENT AGAINST THE DUO, AND FEARS THAT THEY MIGHT USE TAIWAN TO STAGE A COMEBACK, HAVE PRESSURED THE SANYA GOVERNMENT INTO FREEZING THE ASSETS OF THE KITTIKACHORN AND CHARUSATHIEN FAMILIES, AND COST THE THAI AMBASSADOR TO SAIGON HIS JOB. END SUMMARY.

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1. SOMBAT THAMRONGTHANYAWONG, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE NATIONAL STUDENT CENTER OF THAILAND (NSCT), RECENTLY ANNOUNCED THAT THE NSCT WOULD ADDRESS ITSELF TO THE QUESTION OF THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF FORMER THAI LEADERS, PRAPHAT CHARUSATHIEN AND NARONG KITTIKACHORN, IN TAIPEI. THE NSC WAS CONCERNED ABOUT REPORTS IT HAD RECEIVED THAT THE EXILES ARE LIVING COMFORTABLY AND THAT THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA (ROC) PLACED RESTRICTIONS ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE THAI STUDENTS IN TAIPEI. SOMBAT REPORTEDLY SAID THAT ANY GOVERNMENT THAT GIVES SUPPORT TO THE FORMER LEADERS WOULD BE REGARDED AS AN ENEMY OF THAILAND. IN DISCUSSING THE DANGERS OF AN ALLIANCE BETWEEN THE ROC AND PRAPHAT, COMBAT REPORTEDLY DREW PUBLIC ATTENTION TO THE KMT 93RD DIVISION, WHICH OPERATES ON THAI SOIL, AS A POSSIBLE INSTRUMENT OF PRAPHAT'S RETURN. (COMMENT: THE REMNANTS OF THE 93RD DIVISION ARE NOW THE CHINESE IRREGULAR FORCES OF GENERALS LI WEN-HUAN AND TUAN HSI-WEN.) THIS EMBASSY AND THE ROC EMBASSY RECEIVED MOURNING WREATHS OCTOBER 30 AS AN EXPRESSION OF STUDENT CONCERN OVER THE EXILES IN OUR RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES (REF C).

2. A NUMBER OF EDITORIALS HAVE ALSO EXPRESSED PUBLIC FEARS REGARDING THE DUO IN TAIPEI EVER SINCE THEIR DEPARTURE (REFS A AND B). TYPICAL OF WHAT THE PAPERS ARE CARRYING IS SUTHICHA YOOON'S OCTOBER 30 COLUMN, WRITTEN UNDER A PSEUDONYM, IN THE PRESTIGIOUS "SIAM RATH" REMINDING HIS READERS THAT ALTHOUGH THE FORMER LEADERS ARE IN EXILE, "THE STRUCTURE OF THE POWER THEY POSSESSED AND (THEIR) POLITICAL, MILITARY AND CIVILIAN STRENGTH STILL REMAIN." THE COMMENTS OF PUBLIC PERSONALITIES ALONG THE SAME LINES, CARRIED IN THE PRESS, HAVE ALSO CONTRIBUTED TO THE GENERAL UNEASINESS.

3. THE RECENT DISCLOSURE THAT THE THAI AMBASSADOR TO SAIGON, COLONEL PATTANY PHAYAKKANITHI FLEW TO TAIPEI FOR A THREE DAY VISIT ON OCTOBER 18 ADDED FURTHER FUEL TO THE CONTROVERSY. PATTANA ARRIVED IN BANGKOK OVER THE WEEKEND TO CONFER WITH FOREIGN MINISTER CHARUNPHAN ISSARANGUN NA AYUTTHAYA. WITHOUT DISCLOSING THE NATURE OF THE TRIP, PATTANA WAS QUOTED IN THE PRESS AS DENYING THAT HE MET WITH PRAPHAT. NEVERTHELESS, PRESENT FEARS AND PATTANA'S PAST ASSOCIATION WITH PRAPHAT LED TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S ANNOUNCEMENT OCTOBER 30 THAT PATTANA WAS FIRED FOR HIS UNAUTHORIZED TRIP.

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4. A COMPONENT PART OF THE HUE AND CRY OVER THE TAIPEI DUO IS THE DEBATE RAGING IN THE PRESS TO CONFISCATE THE PROPERTY OF THE KITTIKACHORN AND CHARUSATHIEN FAMILIES. SINCE THEIR FALL, THE PRESS AND PUBLIC HAVE BESEECHED THE GOVERNMENT TO USE ARTICLE 17 OF THE 1972 INTERIM CONSTITUTION TO CONFISCATE THE FAMILIES' WEALTH. THE SANYA GOVERNMENT'S SILENCE ON THIS ISSUE WAS IN PART DUE TO A RELUCTANCE TO USE ARTICLE 17 WHICH WAS THE SYMBOL OF THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT'S ARBITRARINESS. THE PRESSURE, HOWEVER, WAS TOO GREAT AND THE GOVERN-

MENT ANNOUNCED OCTOBER 31 THAT THE CABINET HAD AGREED TO USE ARTICLE 17 TO FREEZE THE ASSETS OF THE THREE EXILES. THE RTG ANNOUNCED THAT A COMMITTEE, CHAIRED BY FINANCE MINISTER BOONMA WONGSAWAN WILL INVESTIGATE HOW THESE PROPERTIES WERE ACQUIRED, WITH THE ASSUMPTION THAT PROPERTIES ILLEGALLY ACQUIRED WILL BE CONFISCATED.

5. ROC RELATIONS WITH THAILAND ARE AT A LOW EBB BECAUSE OF THAI PUBLIC FEARS THAT PRAPHAT COULD STAGE A COMEBACK FROM TAIPEI. A SPOKESMAN FOR THE ROC EMBASSY, TRYING TO MAINTAIN A LOW PROFILE,

REPORTEDLY TOLD THE PRESS THAT THE RTG MADE THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR PRAPHAT AND NARONG TO FLY TO TAIPEI AND THAT IS EMBASSY ONLY KNEW OF THE TRIP AN HOUR BEFORE DEPARTURE. PRESS ACCOUNTS OF A ROC FOREIGN MINISTRY STATEMENT SUPPORTED ZMZ ABJMSY'S LINE. THE MINISTRY GAVE REASSURANCES THAT BOTH PRAPHAT AND NARONG "CAME FOR A TEMPORARY STAY" (REF D). MINISTER LING OF THE ROC EMBASSY TOLD THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR NOVEMBER 1 THAT A THAI OFFICIAL HAD SOUGHT PERMISSION FOR THE DUO, AND THANOM AS WELL, TO GO TO TAIPEI. THE ROC EMBASSY GAVE PERMISSION, BUT ISSUED NO VISAS. THE THAI AMBASSADOR IN TAIPEI WAS ON HAND TO RECEIVE THEM. BECAUSE OF THE OFFICIAL'S REQUEST IN BANGKOK AND THE THAI AMBASSADOR'S ROLE IN TAIPEI, THE ROC HAD FELT JUSTIFIED IN ANNOUNCING THAT IT HAD ADMITTED THE DUO AT RTG REQUEST. THE QUESTION OF RTG ASSISTANCE TO THE EXILES IS SO SENSITIVE, HOWEVER, THAT THE SANYA GOVERNMENT IS NOT MAKING PUBLIC WHATEVER ROLE IT MAY HAVE PLAYED IN FACILITATING THE EXILES' DEPARTURE. IN FACT, THE OCTOBER 31 "NATION" PUBLISHED A COMMENT OF A FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL THAT "THE THAI GOVERNMENT HAS NEVER REQUESTED ANY COUNTRY TO ACCOMMODATE THE TOPPLED TRIO AND THEIR FAMILIES."

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7932
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
INFO AMEMBASSY SAIGON
AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMCONSUL UDORN
USLO PEKING

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7. COMMENT: THE SANYA GOVERNMENT'S RELUCTANCE TO CONFISCATE THE EXILES' PROPERTY AND ACKNOWLEDGE WHATEVER ROLE IT MAY HAVE PLAYED IN FACILITATING THE DEPARTURE OF THE FORMER LEADERS IS A MARK OF DOMESTIC REQUIREMENTS TO BE CONCILIATORY. PRECIPITOUS ACTION IN CONFISCATING THE PROPERTY WOULD CERTAINLY HAVE DISQUIETED ELEMENTS WHO ARE FINANCIALLY INTIMATE WITH THANOM AND PRAPHAT. BY FREEZING THE ASSETS RATHER THAN CONFISCATING THEM OUTRIGHT, THE RTG IS TRYING TO YIELD TO PUBLIC DEMANDS WITHOUT ATTACKING OTHER VESTED INTERESTS. PUBLIC AND STUDENT CONCERN ABOUT AN ATTEMPTED COMEBACK RUNS HIGH, AND THE RTG OBVIOUSLY DECIDED TO MOVE BEFORE STUDENT PRESSURE BUILT UP A LARGER HEAD OF STEAM. THE RTG HAS DEFINITELY GAINED MUCH GOODWILL BY THIS MOVE. THE SANYA GOVERNMENT'S FAVORABLE IMAGE, HOWEVER, WILL CONTINUE TO DEPEND ON ITS WILLINGNESS TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE ON SOME OF THE PRESSING PUBLIC ISSUES.

8. THE RTG, FOR ITS OWN PART, PROBABLY DOES NOT WANT TO COMPLICATE ITS RELATIONS WITH THE ROC. THE SANYA GOVERNMENT IS TRYING TO LEAVE ITS SUCCESSOR WITH A FULL RANGE OF OPTIONS. THE RTG, HOWEVER, PROBABLY WILL NOT TAKE ANY OF THE PRESSURE OFF THE ROC
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ON PRAPHAT AND NARONG.
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